



For Immediate Release

Contact: Craig Orfield
(202) 224-6770

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HELP COMMITTEE PASSES BILL TO PROTECT AMERICA'S SENIOR CITIZENS FROM FALLS

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today praised HELP Committee's approval of the "Safety of Seniors (S.O.S.) Act of 2007," S. 845, an innovative bill designed to expand research on approaches to fall prevention and treatment for America's senior citizens.

"For many of our nation's seniors, a fall means serious injury and often leads to a rapid decline in health," Enzi said. "This act will help to prevent falls and save lives through education, prevention and early intervention. By reducing the occurrences and costs of falls, this bill will help to secure the health and safety of America's seniors."

Falls represent a serious health risk for millions of older Americans. In the United States, one of every three persons age 65 and older falls each year. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma for older adults. In 2002, for example, almost 13,000 people over the age of 65 died as a result of fall-related injuries. Enzi said by the year 2030, as the baby boomer generation is added to the ranks of the elderly, the number of people over age 65 is expected to double, potentially doubling the number of elder falls.

The S.O.S. Act will direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to oversee and support national and local education campaigns focusing on reducing falls among older adults and preventing repeat falls. The bill also calls for the Secretary of HHS to evaluate the effect of falls on health care costs, the potential for reducing falls, and the most effective strategies for reducing fall-related health care costs.

"I would like to thank Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) for her diligence and her years of dedication to the prevention of falls among older adults, and I look forward to continuing to work with her as we bring this bill to the full Senate for debate."

The S.O.S. Act authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to:

- develop effective public education strategies in a national initiative to reduce falls among older adults in order to educate older adults, family members, employers, caregivers, and others;
- intensify services and conduct research to determine the most effective approaches to prevent and treat falls among older adults;
- award demonstration grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements to qualified organizations, institutions, or consortia of qualified organizations and institutions to design, implement, and evaluate fall prevention programs and use proven intervention strategies in residential and institutional settings.
- evaluate the effect of falls on health care costs, the potential for reducing falls, and the most effective strategies for reducing health care costs associated with falls.

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